CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN

CHAIRMAN OF PERMANENT COMMITTEE

OF THE

North American Masonic Congress,

AND

CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE

OF THE

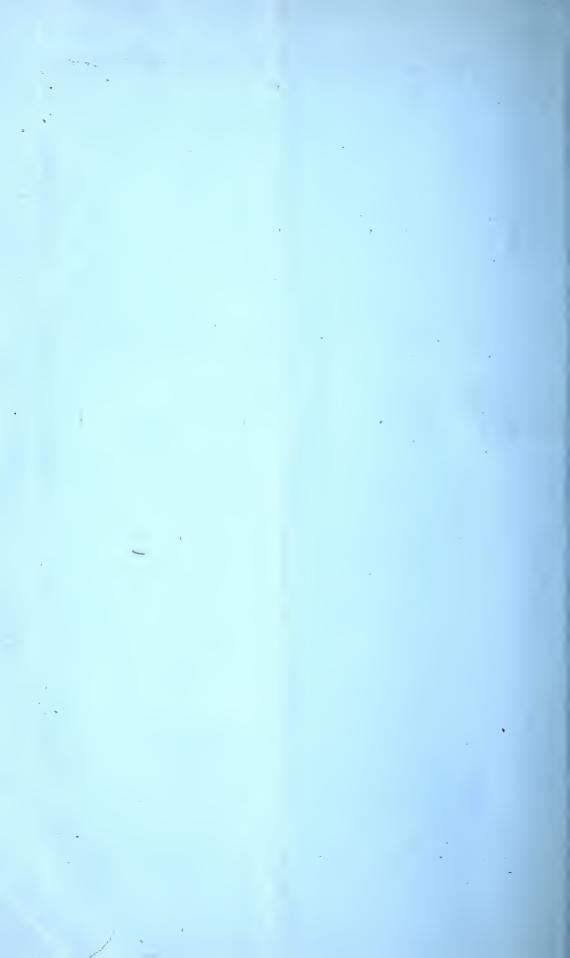
R. W. G. L. OF PENNSYLVANIA, A. Y. M.

SEPTEMBER 3, A. D. 1862, A. L. 5862.

PHILADELPHIA:
KING & BAIRD, PRINTERS, No. 607 SANSOM STREET.

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CORRESPONDENCE, ETC.

To the Officers and Members of the Grand Lodges of Free and Accepted Masons of North America:—

It has become the duty of the undersigned to address to you fraternal salutations, and call your attention to important questions pressing upon the Masonic fraternity in this hour of National trial.

In response to a previous call issued by the Grand Lodge of Maine, a Masonic Convention assembled at Chicago Sept. 13, A. D. 1849, A. L. 5859, and elected—

Bro. Finlay M. King, of New York, President, and

Samuel G. Risk, Louisiana, Secretary.

Thirteen Grand Lodges were there represented, and after deliberation, the basis of

THE NORTH AMERICAN MASONIC CONGRESS

was adopted and sent out to the Grand Lodges of the country, for consideration. A permanent Committee of Correspondence was constituted, as follows: Cyrll Pearl, Maine, Chairman.

A. T. C. Pierson, Minnesota.

Albert G. Mackey, South Carolina.

John L. Lewis, Jr., New York.

PHILIP C. TUCKER, Vermont.

GILES M. HILLYER, Mississippi.

Benj. B. French, District of Columbia.

Elbert H. English, Arkansas.

John Frizzelle, Tennessee.

In the event that five Grand Lodges should accept the Articles of Association, it was made the duty of the Chairman to certify the same to the Secretary, at New Orleans, who was thereby required to issue an invitation to all the Grand Lodges in North America, to meet in council, and consummate the organization, at Memphis, Tenn., Sept. 5, 1862; the place appointed for the triennial sessions of the General Grand Chapter and Grand Encampment of the United States.

More than the requisite number of Grand Lodges had accepted the Articles of Association prior to the outbreak of the civil war which has convulsed our Nation and disturbed the peace of the world. Several others had reported in favor of the Congress, without final action. Since our national calamity has arisen, other Grand Officers and distinguished Masons, not before known to be in favor of the Congress, have urged the calling of

A NATIONAL MASONIC CONVENTION,

for fraternal counsel, not so much for "the discussion of those esoteric subjects of ordinary times," as for a sincere endeavor to pour the oil of tranquility on the troubled waters of national strife. If it is impossible to stay the deadly conflict, they would seek to alleviate its woes, and to spread the cement of brotherly love, when the storm, and tempest, and carnage, shall be overpast. In the beautiful language of our veteran Brother Moore, in his Free Masons' Magazine, for July:

"It is with the grand purposes and objects that must, as a matter of the most obvious duty to humanity, to our Order, and to our country; occupy the first and foremost place in the deliberations of the proposed convention of Grand Lodges, that we are now concerned.

Those purposes and objects may all be expressed under one grand heading—The duty, mode, and means of applying the balm of Free Masonry to the healing of the country's rankling wounds."

To these sentiments every true Masonic heart will respond with a generous impulse. *How*, *when*, and *where* shall such a convention be called?

Since the convention at Chicago, several distinguished brothers, who shared its labors, have passed from earth. Among them, we remember the beloved Barker, of Rhode Island, Dunlap, of Maine, Tucker, of Vermont, Risk, of Louisiana, Stokes, of Ohio, and Melody, of Missouri.

Their venerated forms will not meet us in the next convention. Bro. Risk cannot issue the call,

ner Bro. Tucker report on Foreign Correspondence. Shall the meeting fail, therefore? Shall we stand upon strict formality when standard-bearers fall? If our brothers cannot meet us in material form, in spirit—with others, who left before them—Warren, Washington, King, Clay, Marshall, and their compeers—they will share and inspire our counsels.

There are four other members of the committee we are unable to reach by correspondence, Brothers Mackey, of South Carolina, Hillyer, of Mississippi, Frizzelle, of Tennessee, and English, of Arkansas. The responsibility of calling the Congress, therefore, rests with the other members. After correspondence and consultation, they have decided to call—and they do by this Circular—call a meeting of the North American Masonic Congress, to be holden in the city of New York, on Friday, the fifth day of September, A. D. 1862, A. L. 5862, at nine o'clock in the forenoon.

They desire to see all the Grand Lodges on this Continent then and there represented, for fraternal consultation, unembarrassed by any previous action of the Congress, or of the Grand Lodges in reference to it.

In order to the greater freedom of deliberation, and efficiency of action, and in accordance with indications above referred to, the Committee invite all the Grand Lodges of North America to assemble in Convention, at the said place of meeting, by their Grand Officers or Representatives, on Tuesday, the second day of September, at three o'clock, in the afternoon, for purposes so well expressed in the Free Masons' Magazine, above referred to. The

time and place are chosen because the session of the Grand Encampment of the United States is called at New York, September 1, by the Most Excellent Grand Commander, B. B. French, who is a member of the Committee of the Congress.

It is especially desired that the Officers and members of the Grand Encampment and General Grand Chapter should meet in council with the proposed convention.

The General Grand High Priest, Bro. Mackey, has his home in Charleston, South Carolina. He may not be able to meet or communicate with either the convention or the General Grand Chapter.—If so, may not the members of that body meet informally, and join in the deliberations of the proposed Convention?

The time is short. Many of the Grand Bodies may not be able to call meetings for definite action and formal appointments. For the purposes of consultation on the proposed Convention and Congress, the spontaneous action of the Grand Officers, or their authorized Representatives, is deemed sufficient. The Committee would gladly meet every noble-hearted brother whose spirit prompts to right action, whether he be a present or a past Grand Officer.

In behalf of the Permanent Committee of the North American Masonic Congress,

CYRIL PEARL, Chairman.
Secretary, ad interim.



REPLY.

DEAR SIR AND BROTHER:

At a Quarterly Grand Communication of the Right Worshipful Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, Ancient York Masons, held September 1, your printed communication on behalf of the "Permanent Committee of the North American Masonic Congress," was received, read, and referred to the Committee of Correspondence.

Without noticing the prefatory history of the organization you represent, we understand that you invite the co-operation of "this Grand Lodge, or its "Grand Officers, or representatives, or every noble-"hearted brother whose spirit prompts to right "action, whether a present or past Grand Officer, "to a "fraternal consultation, unembarrassed by any "previous action of the Congress, or of the Grand "Lodges, in reference to it," 'not so much for the "discussion of those esoteric subjects of ordinary "times,' as for a sincere endeavor to pour the oil of "tranquility on the troubled waters of national strife."

This, we think, fairly presents the substance of your invitation. We recognize among the names of the Brethren uniting for the objects above mentioned, able, patriotic men, and bright lights in the

Council-Halls of the Fraternity. The motives which actuate them, and the purpose they contemplate, are worthy of the unfeigned and unconditional admiration of the brotherhood and of humanity. Our God, our Country, and our Craft receive from all true Masons love, devotion and duty. The brethren in Pennsylvania believe themselves animated by these virtues, and seek to be guided by their dictates. They feel, that in the unobtrusive profession of this faith, they are not behind the most zealous in its legitimate demonstration. Therefore, it is, that in replying to your invitation, there are but two questions which require notice.

The propriety of the formation of a National Grand Lodge, and its consequent powers and aims, are not now directly involved. On this subject the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania has very decidedly spoken, and no reasons have been since suggested which have changed her opinion.

The remaining question embraced in your communication, requires fuller consideration. The principles and teachings of masonry are circumscribed to those who, understandingly, embrace them. The 'outside world' is not, even under the most favorable condition of its social or political systems, prepared to obey the one, or listen with willing hearts and minds to the other. The purity, self-sacrificing obedience, subordination, disinterestedness, charity, brotherly love and forbearance with each other, which should mark true Masons, find in the mind of mankind but little soil in which they can take root and

grow. As an organization, for the preservation and dissemination of these fundamental doctrines of masonry, no great progress, real progress, has been lately made by it among nations or peoples. The standard of Masonic requirements is too high to be reached, without careful preparation. Hence, the scope of Masonic usefulness is narrowed to those who know and believe in the value of its influences.

At this time of peril to our country, the still small voice of Masonic faith and practice has not, I fear, power enough to rise above the din of arms and the roar of the battle, and call the people to reflect on existing follies, vices, crimes, and their consequences—to gather into silence and consider, by the light of pure patriotism, what the end of these things will be.

The effort, if made, would demand a condition of public affairs, which has not yet arisen, or it may be, has passed away. To undertake such a duty, and to fail, would not be justified by the consolation sought in the reflection, that the effort was made and was ineffectual. The effort, if made, would require a co-relation of means to the object, which at present appears hopeless of attainment.

No, the great duty of Masonry, at this crisis, is to point to her temple and the principles on which it was built, and on which it still rests—to promulgate before the world that the teachings of the Craft begun when centuries were young, and in all languages, among all nations, in war and in peace, they have never failed to benefit mankind, in prosperity or despair. And an equally important duty devolves upon us, to maintain, support and abide

by the principles, landmarks and privileges of the Craft—to stand steadfast by the cardinal objects of the fraternity—to hold in reverence the traditional history of the Order. In times of excitement, or great public peril, let us calmly consider our action, lest zeal for the best cause, with the noblest incentives, may lead us to impair those powers for the general good of man, which attaches to our Order as a paramount duty, in the future of human progress. Thus, it seems, from the action of the Right Worshipful Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, in regard to your communication, to which I now reply, that she has not been able to regard it in such a light, as to convince her of the propriety of her concurrence in the plan your invitation suggests.

It is proper here to remark, that having only this morning received from the Right Worshipful Grand Secretary of our Grand Lodge, your communication, and as your meeting takes place to-morrow, a fraternal regard and respect for the eminent men and brethren whom you represent, as well as the purpose of the meeting, requires a prompt reply. To accomplish this, it has not been possible to summon my colleagues on this Committee; therefore, I have taken the responsibility of addressing you this note, fully believing that they will sanction, as I sincerely trust you will appreciate, its spirit and its purpose.

With the most sincere regard and fraternal salutation to your Committee and yourself—clothed in that solemnity of feeling which this subject suggests, and trusting to the God and Father of all for that

fortitude, strength and wisdom which makes man a patriot, and Masons good and true.

I am your brother,

In the bonds of Free Masonry,

RICHARD VAUX,

Chairman Committee of Correspondence of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.

Sept. 3, A. D. 1862.

To Right Worshipful Cyril Pearl, Chairman, Secretary, &c., P. C. N. A. C.

